

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A bread improving agent ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of fermented soybean protein which is fermented by lactic acid bacteria and yeast and then sterilized.

2. (Currently amended) The bread improving agent of claim 1, wherein the lactic fermentation is performed ~~substantially~~ simultaneously or before the yeast fermentation.

3. (Original) The bread improving agent of claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria used for the lactic fermentation is derived from sour leaven.

4. (Original) The bread improving agent of claim 1, wherein the fermented soybean protein is obtained by further reacting a protease with the soybean protein.

5. (Original) The bread improving agent of claim 1, which has a pH of 4.0 to 4.8.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently amended) Bread comprising the bread improving agent of claim 1, wherein the bread improving agent is added in an amount of 0.35 to 3.5 parts by weight in terms of a soybean solid content based on 100 parts by weight of cereal flour for bread.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently amended) A process for producing bread which comprises mixing ~~fermented soybean protein fermented by lactic acid bacteria and yeast~~ the bread improving agent of claim 1 in an amount of 0.35 to 3.5 parts by weight in terms of a soybean solid content based on 100 parts by weight of cereal flour for bread with cereal flour for bread to prepare dough.

10. (New) The bread improving agent of claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria used for the lactic fermentation is derived from panetone sour leaven.